



Rodney's Take

September 28, 2020

Who Will Care for All of the Pets?

Years ago, one of our neighbors complained on Facebook about dog owners allowing their pets to do their business in her yard. Other neighbors chimed in, bashing those who failed to clean up after dogs. But then the original poster clarified her remarks. The owners were picking up after their pets, she just had a problem with the dogs using her grass at all. It took several comments before people realized what she meant. She didn't want dogs walking on her lawn at all, for any reason.

With the pandemic, she must be having conniption fits.

Having worked from home for years, I got used to sharing my neighborhood with just a few retirees during working hours, but that's in the past. Now we have cyclists, joggers, walkers, and, of course, delivery people streaming through all day long. And many people have their pets in tow.

It appears that the pandemic has given pet owners time to bond with their furry friends and has given would-be pet owners the motivation to take the plunge.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) reported that adoption applications during the first two months of the pandemic jumped 400%. While actual adoptions were held down because of reduced volunteer hours at shelters and other procedural reasons, pet stores and breeders appear to be enjoying stepped up demand.

We're replacing our coworkers with dogs and cats.

While they complain less about our work habits, clothing, and the smell of our lunches, they do come with other issues, which could be both a problem and an opportunity once the pandemic is over. Pets require consistent, if not constant, care.

Unlike coworkers, we must attend to our pets' daily schedules. Dogs need walks and exercise even during bad weather. They enjoy companionship. They need to eat. Many need medicine. These needs won't end when corporate America recalls at least some percentage of workers back to the office after our long stint of working remotely.

And don't forget about vacations.

Most of us remained at home this year, forgoing vacations because we didn't want to be on planes or in hotels, and many destinations were closed anyway. Just as many of us will go back into work, one day we'll also get back on the vacation schedule. Unless we're planning to take our new RVs everywhere, chances are the pets won't go with us.

When we're able to leave the house again, many new pet owners will face the same issues that long-time pet owners have dealt with, such as juggling doggie daycare, hiring pet sitters and walkers, and sorting out pet care

when they are gone for days at a time. These services don't come cheap and, just like other service businesses, many shut down permanently during the pandemic.

We recently dropped our dog at the local kennel... er, pet resort as they prefer to be called. I asked the owner if business had continued through the pandemic. She said daytime visits were steady, but overnight stays, which pay the bills, had all but dried up. She's still in business, but several of her competitors have closed up shop.

When we finally get through the great reopening, new pet owners will be vying with long-time pet owners for services from a dwindling number of providers. While those of us with dogs and cats in search of a pet resort for a few nights around the holidays will be frustrated, the kennel owners who managed to keep the doors open through the downturn will be turning away business. Don't be surprised if they also raise prices.

Rodney

Got a question or comment? You can contact us at info@hsdent.com.